

**European Forum for the Study of Religion and Environment**  
Fifth International Conference (May 14 to 17, Munich)

***Religion in the Anthropocene: Challenges, Idolatries, Transformations***

Paper proposal

**In Between Epochs? Hermeneutical Generosity and the Promise of Being**

Even if expert deliberations on whether we have crossed the threshold of a new geological epoch are still ongoing, it is generally realised that humans have constructed a second ethos within the first ethos we originated in. However, to William Desmond, it is the mindful experience of this first ethos that makes us aware of the exigencies of other beings, which the second ethos made harder to recognize and therefore respond to (Desmond 2001a: 44-45). From the very outset of his *Ethics and the Between*, he qualifies our current mode of living as in an *incognito of the good*, (Desmond 2001a: 1), in denial of the promise of being of the other (Desmond 1998: 136 & 140).

In this paper, I will explore in what manner Desmond's notion of the *community of agapeic* service and its plurivocity of ethical practices (Desmond 2001b: 320) could actually allow for the other's promise of *being agapeic* (Desmond 2012: 44). This will require a development of his crucial notion of "reverence," exceeding respect (Desmond 2001c: 182; 2005: 270). In no manner a passive attitude, it calls for a real creativity which 'reveals the generosity of being' (Desmond 2001a: 354). Moreover, the specifics of the "hermeneutical generosity" (Desmond 1995: 124-125) or "hermeneutics of ontological gratitude" (Colledge 2013: 34), grounding his metaxological ethics of relation (Kearney 2007: 200), will be assessed. This hermeneutics will be found to situate itself on the interface of morality and the religious (Desmond 2008: 154).

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## Curriculum Vitae

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## Studies

Master of Science in Chemistry (UGent, 1994)

Advanced Master of Science in Environmental Sciences and Technologies (UGent, 2000)

Master of Arts in World Religions, Interreligious Dialogue and Religious Studies (KU Leuven, 2012)

## Professional

Teacher in Chemistry and Physics, Secondary Education • Sint-Paul's College, Herzele (1995-1999)

Coordinator of the measurement network for hazardous pollutants (surface water) • Flemish Environment Agency (Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij) (2000-2001)

Assistant to the director - expert • Flemish Government, Department of the Environment, Nature and Energy  
Environmental Information and Education (2002-2006)  
Environmental Assessment (EIA/SEA) (2006-2012)

Member of the European Commission Environmental Assessment National Experts Group (2009-2012)

Doctoral Researcher in Environmental Ethics • KU Leuven - Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies,  
Research Unit of Theological and Comparative Ethics (September 2012-present)

## Publications

Maeckelberghe, H., Van den Noortgaete, F. & Verhagen, G. (2000). *Water Quality - Discharges in Surface Water*. Erembodegem: VMM.

Van den Noortgaete, F., De Tavernier, J. (2014). *Legere-Ligare: An Interpretive Key to the Environmentalist Experience of Nature*. *Louvain Studies*, 38 (1), 55-76 .

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